

THE UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA  
SCHOOL OF LAW

February 25, 1987

Mr. James G. Blight  
John F. Kennedy School of Government  
79 John F. Kennedy Street  
Harvard University  
Cambridge, Massachusetts 02138

Dear Mr. Blight:

I very much regret that I shall not be able to attend the meeting at Hawk's Cay on the Cuban missile crisis.

I am writing you this letter about the Jupiter missiles in Turkey since I very likely am the only living person who must know about that particular subject.

When President Kennedy took office, he had in front of him a very critical report from the Joint Atomic Energy Committee of Congress about the Jupiter missiles in Turkey and Italy. The Committee considered these missiles to be both obsolete and vulnerable. I remember that we joked about which way the missiles would fly if they were fired. I also remember being told that a tourist driving an automobile along a public highway with a .22 caliber rifle could knock holes in the skins of these missiles.

In any event, President Kennedy asked me to talk up with the Turkish government the matter of withdrawing their missiles. In May 1, 1961, I attended a meeting of the Foreign Ministers of CENTO held in Ankara. The United States was not a signatory of CENTO, but the Secretary of State attended as an observer.

After dinner I had a walk in the garden with Mr. Selim Sarper, the Foreign Minister of Turkey, and took up with him the matter of withdrawing the Jupiters from Turkey. He expressed considerable concern on two grounds. First, he said that the Turkish government had not gotten approval in its Parliament for the Turkish costs of the Jupiter missiles and that it would be very embarrassing for them to go right back and tell the Parliament that the Jupiters were being withdrawn. Second, he said that it would be very damaging to the morale of Turkey if the Jupiters were to be withdrawn before Polaris submarines became available in the Mediterranean but these submarines could not become available until the spring of 1963.

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Upon returning to Washington, I went over these Turkish points with President Kennedy, and he accepted the idea of some delay in removing the Jupiters. It is generally supposed that at the time of the Cuban missile crisis President Kennedy was angry when he discovered that the Jupiters had not been removed from Turkey. I would simply say that he never expressed any irritation to me because he had been fully briefed by me on that situation.

During the Cuban missile crisis the question of the Jupiters in Turkey came up and, indeed, was raised by the Russians in their message of Friday, October 26. In a small meeting in the Oval Office with President Kennedy, McManara, Bobby Kennedy, McGeorge Bundy and perhaps one other, I suggested that since the Jupiters in Turkey were coming out in any event that we should inform the Russians of this in order that this irrelevant question would not complicate the solution of the missile sites in Cuba. It was agreed that Bobby Kennedy would so inform Ambassador Dobrynin. When we returned to our offices, I telephoned Bobby Kennedy to underline that he should pass this information along to Dobrynin as information. He told me that he was sitting with Dobrynin at the time of my call and that he had already told Dobrynin what he had to say on that subject. I do not know the exact words used by Bobby Kennedy, but he told me later that Dobrynin had described what he had said as "very important information."

The question as to whether there was an "agreement" with the Russians is largely a matter of taste. Ambassador Dobrynin brought back to Bobby Kennedy a paper in writing recording the exchange on the Turkish Jupiters. That piece of paper was returned to Dobrynin as inappropriate in the circumstances. My own view is that this transaction was not an agreement in the traditional sense. I was concerned that if the Turkish government suddenly ordered the withdrawal of the Jupiters and received a substantial report in 1961, we would have been faced with some serious problems beyond the spring of 1960.

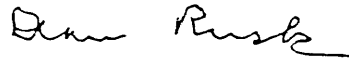
However, there is a postscript which only I remember. It was clear to me that President Kennedy would not let the Jupiters in Turkey become an obstacle to the removal of the missile sites in Cuba because the Jupiters were coming out in any event. He instructed me to telephone the late Andrew Cordier, then at Columbia University, and dictate to him a statement which would be given by U Thant, the Secretary General of the United Nations, proposing the removal of both the Jupiters and the missiles in Cuba. Mr. Cordier was to put that statement in the hands of U Thant only after further signal

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from us. That step was never taken and the statement I furnished to Mr. Cordier has never seen the light of day. So far as I know, President Kennedy, Andrew Cordier and I were the only ones who knew of this particular step.

With personal best wishes,

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Dean Rusk".

Dean Rusk